

Becoming a Music City

Event Final Report

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for the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce

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1. Summary

On Wednesday, February 22nd, the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce hosted the event “Becoming a Music City” in the Galileo Room of the Italian Cultural Centre. Admission was \$12 (+HST) with tickets available in advance. The event took place from 1:30pm to 4:30pm and began with a musical performance by Robin Ranger (Jazz trio), followed by a keynote presentation by Graham Henderson of Music Canada. This was followed by a panel discussion with Jen McKerral of Music & Film in Motion, Cory Crossman of the London Music Office, Jason Wellwood of CILU 102.7fm, and musician Jean-Paul De Roover. After the panel, group discussions were held amongst the attendees, followed by a brief presentation of their conversations to the group and panelists for further discussion. The event was hosted by Paul Pepe of Thunder Bay Tourism, one of the lead sponsors.

2. Planning / Resources

The original vision for the event was for it to be a luncheon held at a local restaurant/music venue. After careful consideration of the added costs of providing full meals to attendees as well as having to pay rent to close the venue for a private event, it was decided that the event should move to a different space, with a smaller “café” menu option instead. Every effort was made to reduce the cost of admission in order to have a wider variety of musicians and business owners in attendance. Please see the Sponsorship section about additional funding that provided free admission to 10 musicians.

3. Participants

Graham Henderson – *Music Canada*

Graham was an influential asset to the event. His knowledge and expertise as a driving force behind economic development in many communities and the continued exploration of the Music City concept made him a great resource for both the event and for what may come of it.

Jen McKerral – *Music & Film in Motion*

Jen is the music officer at Music & Film in Motion based out of Sudbury. Her role within the organization is to help develop the music industry. She was selected as a panelist because of her expertise providing resources for musicians and encouraging music businesses to develop throughout Northern Ontario.

Cory Crossman – *London Music Office*

Cory's job is a direct result of the City of London moving forward towards becoming a music city. After hosting a similar event, the municipality and community decided it was in their best interests to create an office that is intended to bridge the gap between musicians, businesses and local government. His perspective and experience as a Music Officer for the past year and half were some of the main reasons for inviting him to be a panelist.

Jason Wellwood – *CILU 102.7fm*

Jason has been the station manager at LU Radio in Thunder Bay for many years, and brought the community aspect of music to the discussion. Additionally, his recent acquisition of New Day Records also made him a music retail business owner – something rare given market trends for sold music.

Jean-Paul De Roover – *Musician*

Jean-Paul is a local musician, producer and composer that earns his living through musical pursuits. His connection to the local music scene through TBShows as well as his festival and event coordination experience with the City of Thunder Bay make him a valuable liaison to the rest of the music community.

Paul Pepe – *Thunder Bay Tourism*

Paul has long been an advocate of all of Thunder Bay's best qualities. His knowledge of the tourism industry and his excitement for improving Thunder Bay's visibility internationally makes him a natural spokesperson for the event, and someone who truly champions the attainable idea of developing this northern town into a Music City.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

The Chamber was in charge of coordinating the event's logistics, finding sponsors, promotion and engaging the business community. Jean-Paul De Roover was brought on as a consultant to help inform the agenda for the event, engage the musical community and assist with event coordination.

On the day of the event, Jean-Paul De Roover assisted with set-up and tear-down, as well as participated as a panelist. The Chamber staff were on site to run registration, coordinate with the venue and assist with set-up and tear-down. Paul Pepe was on site prior to the start of the event in order to meet with some of the panelists as he was also brought on board as the event's master of ceremonies.

Additional contracted personnel included Will Reedpath (sound technician) and featured performers Robin Ranger (Jazz trio).

5. Sponsorship / Promotion / Partners

The Chamber of Commerce was the coordinating force behind the event, however additional funding was provided through sponsors. Thunder Bay Tourism provided \$1,500, and the City of Thunder Bay provided \$120 to cover the costs of 10 musicians' registration fees to attend the event. Those attendees were chosen by the Chamber staff and event coordinator, based on financial need and the niche they represented.

Promotion for the event included a mixture of print and web media, as well as radio. The TBCC used their event promotion strategy for this event, which includes email blasts to their membership as well as local and regional media. Some of the successes of this included an article in The Walleye's February issue, interviews on CBC in both English (Thunder Bay) and French (Sudbury), and an interview on CILU 102.7fm in Thunder Bay. Online promotion included Facebook sponsored posts, and content sharing amongst event partners like TBShows and Tourism Thunder Bay.

6. Issues

On the day of the event there was a considerable amount of bad weather in the Greater Toronto Area, which resulted in canceled flights for both Jen McKerral (Sudbury) and Cory Crossman (London). Because of this, last minute adjustments to the event format and tech logistics had to be made so that those panelists could use Skype to still participate in the event. Despite those changes, response from both the panelists and the attendees was positive.

7. Pre-Event Survey

Prior to the event, an online survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey in order to discover some of the topics of interest and issues/concerns that might be most relevant for this first event. Basic demographic questions were included, but the focus was on the positive and negative aspects of Thunder Bay as a musical community, centre for creative industries, and more. The questions were based on some of the most relevant tenets of the Music Cities Toolkit, meant to allow the event coordinator to better direct the event's direction and agenda based on what was most important to the public. There were a total of 26 respondents, and the results are available in Appendix A.

8. Agenda

Taking recommendations from the Music Cities Toolkit, as well as from previous experiences at panelist driven events at CMW, NXNE, NOMFA's and more, an agenda

was created for the event by the TBCC staff, the event coordinator and representatives from Tourism Thunder Bay. Additional feedback was provided by several of the panelists prior to the agenda's announcement. The agenda was made available to attendees prior to the event along with a single question meant to create a launching point for their own contributions to the day's discussions: "What can Thunder Bay do to become more of a Music City?"

Please see the attached Agenda in Appendix B.

9. Questions

After having conducted the pre-event survey, 3 questions were identified to pose to the attendees. The questions are as follows, with summarized findings below:

1. *What are some of the challenges venues in Thunder Bay currently face? What are some of the challenges/barriers that exist for artists looking to perform? How can these issues be addressed?*

A) Challenges for venues:

- Need to find ways of encouraging more people into their venues.
- Some would offer more all ages alternatives, however there doesn't seem to be a significant interest among youth which is why all ages events are often held on weeknights, allowing the venues to still serve their typical 19+ crowds on weekends.

B) Challenges/barriers for artists:

- Lack of rehearsal spaces in general, as well as affordable/secure spaces.
- Limited opportunities for paid gigs.
- Limited performance opportunities for youth, as well as all ages / appropriate venues for that demographic.

C) Resolutions

- Do more to promote live music in local venues.
- Take an inventory of all the assets in Thunder Bay (venues, musicians, workshops, resources, etc.) and create a directory listing and allow people to add to it.

2. *There is a shortage of rehearsal space for musicians in Thunder Bay. What can businesses do to help alleviate this shortage? What can musicians do to overcome this challenge? Propose some solutions.*

- Businesses that have vacant space or available space after hours can rent it out to musicians at a reasonable fee. This will open up more rehearsal space opportunities for artists and in return support local businesses. With the space already being unused it will allow business owners to be more flexible and considerate at renting it out to artists at a reasonable fee.
- Additional suggestions were made to approach the school boards to use empty classrooms/gymnasias after hours for acts and non-profit, community groups. Also look at coordinating with music programs to allow youth (students) to stay in music rooms after school / outside of class time for rehearsals.
- No suggestions were made for how to connect business owners sympathetic to the idea of renting their spaces with the musicians that need them.

3. *What can our community do to improve opportunities for local artists? What can our community do to improve opportunities for local businesses? How can both artists and businesses help one another? (Opportunities can include things like participation in festivals, public/private funding, artistic/business education, and improving available resources)*

- Encourage venues/promoters to book local artists as opening acts for touring artists, festivals and national/international headliners. This will help bridge the separation of music classes and the stigma of the “local musician”.
- Have a designated spokesperson for all musicians, similar to the role of a music officer.
- Local artists need to shop local and look for resources in Thunder Bay before searching elsewhere.
- There needs to be more education opportunities for musicians in areas such as: social media presence, digital music distribution, recording contracts, attracting music business partners (managers, labels, etc.), promotional materials (graphic design, photography), the business side of music, music royalties, other revenue streams and more.

Things to note:

- A lot of the conversation was self-focused. Most attendees had their own agenda and wanted to make sure the conversation was directly addressing their issues and needs.

- Local talent needs to be celebrated/highlighted more-so than previously. Potentially creating new events/festivals based around this idea of local pride.

10. Recommendations

Based on the responses from the participants in the previous section and conversations that occurred during the event, three main ideas recommendations were made:

A) Creation of a Music Office

A need for a Music Office was identified at the event. While Thunder Bay may only be able to justify the creation of a new position at a part-time level, it is still important to have a resource available to the community in an un-biased, official capacity. Organizations like Music & Film in Motion have a Music Officer that is technically responsible for all of Northern Ontario, however the resources they have make it difficult to be in Thunder Bay regularly. Because of this, there is no strong relationship with them has developed. If a similar type of position was available here in Thunder Bay, the access would improve dramatically, as well as the Officer themselves would be much more connected to what's happening locally. The need for a "connector" is apparent. For example, a musician wants to record a song, promote it and go on tour – the Officer would help connect them to funding agencies in order to pay for the recording at a local studio, find a local publicist to promote it, use existing booking agents to book select dates, etc. These connections would see more artists (and businesses) utilizing the available talent in Thunder Bay, helping economic growth within the regional music industry.

Options for the Music Office include partnering with existing organizations such as Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Tourism, City of Thunder Bay or the Thunder Bay Musician's Association to house the office for this new position, as well as potentially taking on the responsibility of Music Officer themselves. Meetings and communication between these organizations will be important to the initial planning and development of the Office and officer position.

A more detailed list of roles and responsibilities for the Music Office will be created once specific parameters of the position are put into place. Some of these parameters include what agency/organization is funding the position, and for how long. Some responsibilities could include maintaining a resource database for the region, being available for consults with artists/organizations, hosting events/workshops, being a liaison between the music industry and various levels of government, among others.

B) Asset Assessment

Requests were made to have all of the music-related resources in Thunder Bay tabulated and made available in one central location. This includes everything from venue information, contact information for performers, music-related business databases and more. Several local partners such as TBSHOWS have created and currently maintain some of these resources. Other organizations that host similar databases include: Music & Film in Motion (Sudbury), Thunder Bay Musician's Association, Thunder Bay Museum and The Trunk. Of those five listed, TBSHOWS, the Thunder Bay Musician's Association and the Thunder Bay Museum are the only ones that have their own data collection methods in order to maintain those resources, while Music & Film in Motion and The Trunk are based on user submissions.

Because of the additional research involved in updating these resources as well as their maintenance, it is recommended that the Music Officer identified in section A) take on this responsibility. If not, one of the above organizations should take the lead in order to help produce a definitive, up-to-date resource for the region.

C) Creation of a Task Force / Committee

Similar to other music cities, members of the community at large have to become invested in the different projects needed to improve conditions and opportunities between the music and business communities. The creation of a Task Force / Committee is recommended to oversee the forward movement of the efforts that began with the "Becoming A Music City" event, and help to guide the various special interest subcommittees that can be created. It became evident at the event that there are so many different areas with their own respective issues that deserve attention. Rather than having committee members having to work on projects of little to no relevance to their organization / area of expertise, it is recommended that several subcommittees are created to focus on some of these diverse areas, including Education, Youth Engagement, Venue/Promoter Relations and more. These various subcommittees and their respective targets will be identified partly through the results of the Post-Event Survey which will help to encourage Task Force and subcommittee members to become a part of the ongoing development of Thunder Bay as a Music City.

11. Post-Event Survey

After the publication and distribution of this final report, the TBCC will create and distribute a survey designed to collect feedback from the attendees. It will assist the TBCC in identifying how it can improve its delivery of similar follow-up events in order to maximize the community engagement and involvement, while acknowledging barriers

(cost, time of event, etc.) to the previous event that were not accounted for. Additionally, it will serve as a springboard to find partners willing to participate in various task forces and committees that may come into existence after this report.

12. Final Remarks

The “Becoming a Music City” event was the first of it’s kind for Thunder Bay. It brought together artists, organizations, shareholders, municipal workers and many, many more to have a discussion about how to improve Thunder Bay’s music industry. While the process will be a long one, the energy of the community is there. With the right leadership and support to help continue the discussion and drive the initiative forward, we’ll all be surprised with the positive changes we can make in our own backyard as we transform this Northern town into a Music City.

For a full list of web-links to all of the organizations and entities listed in this report, please see Appendix C.

Appendix A

Pre-Event Survey Results

Q1: Age

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Under 18	3.85%	1
19 to 24	3.85%	1
25 to 29	19.23%	5
30 to 34	15.38%	4
35 to 49	30.77%	8
50 or older	26.92%	7

Total: 26 respondents

Q2: Which of these terms best describes you and your work (check all that apply):

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Musician	65.38%	17
Promoter	15.38%	4
Venue	7.69%	2
Business Owner	19.23%	5
Community Group	15.38%	4
Municipal/Government	7.69%	2
Music fan	69.23%	18
Other/Non-Music Industry	3.85%	1

Other/Non-Music Industry (please specify): Sales

Q3: At what level do you participate in the self-identified category above?

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Full-time	50.00%	13
Part-time	30.77%	8
Casual	19.23%	5
Other	0.00%	0

Q4: Do you feel that Thunder Bay has an adequate number of music-related businesses and professionals?

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	45.83%	11
No	54.17%	13

Additional responses:

- A) Venues are always the issue
- B) Get bands in town that appeal to everyone, there are a lot of great Canadian musicians out there that people enjoy seeing and they never come here. It seems the effort isn't there to appeal to every audience.
- C) Venues - there is a lack of live music venues open to different genres of music.
- D) Live venues and recorded media opportunity music professionals are over abundant and venue opps are restricted / existing venues face issues i.e. security, costs, space, hydro etc. no consistent venues for full band acts, venues need clients, clients need to want live music media controls the mind and our media is controlled TV and radio.
- E) Bars should hire live music as much as they can.
- F) Venues for live music, opportunities for kids to learn instruments.
- G) There is a lack of "non-exposure" venues and thinking. There are a number of music professionals who are commonly asked to perform in venues for "exposure" pay rather than their true value based on their success in the industry. Additionally, the Musician's Association is not tremendously supportive of ventures within the city. Major hotel establishments could certainly help to fill a void as well as additional restaurants if partnerships between the hotels/venues/associations and the Arts community funders could be undertaken.
- H) A range of venue sizes are lacking. You either play in a bar with capacity x or the community auditorium with a 1500 seat capacity.
- I) Encourage more indie events, businesses, etc. I would love to see even more advertising.
- J) Recording

Q5: Does Thunder Bay have a receptive and engaged audience for live music?

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	83.33%	20
No	16.67%	4

Additional responses:

- A) TBay seems to be a closed market youth mostly need electronic music boomers like classic rock mostly Although youth will likely follow crowds and do have an expanded tolerance for other genres. It always comes down to economics 30 years ago we had 5-7 venues running full acts 7 days a week with matinees on Saturday or Sunday. Now we have one supporting 2 notes a week
- B) Consistency and show quality are a large part of creating engagement... Additionally, local music societies and organizations could play a key role... A venue like the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium could be utilized for "stage door" performances or full fledged concerts featuring local musicians / acts.
- C) Thunder Bay would seem to have a reputation for not being the most welcoming. Unless it's a classic rock band then maybe the older generation will come out in full force, but they'll chill in their chairs rather than in my opinion, completely engage. Bands just stop coming here on their tours.

Q6: Do you have issues with access to music spaces and places? (These include, for example, rehearsal facilities, venues, etc.)

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	50.00%	11
No	50.00%	11

Additional responses:

- A) Venues that actually pay decently to the musicians that "work" there. Contrary to popular belief what we do on stage is how we work and a lot of times at the end of the day walk away with less money than the kid at the drive through asking if we want fries with our meal.
- B) Rehearsal space is limited early mentioned venue education is limited. We could offer education and space seed money for recorded media. Supply opportunity for youth involve colleges and university TV radio campus radio rural support for transportation. Volunteers for band and musician logistics i.e. roadie. Offer marketing support to local talent of original content as well as finance and logistics.
- C) A directory of these services would be nice.
- D) Outside the box thinking that expands the use of various venues to more complete audience demographics - some clubs after only to youth markets while others are more stringent towards established acts.
- E) Rehearsal facilities are hard to come by...lots of venues if you can network with the right crowd.

- F) There are so many empty buildings around town, it would be nice to see more jam space available for bands.
- G) Often costs for rehearsal spaces and performance venues can be very high, particularly to non- for profit groups. Venues like the COMMUNITY auditorium are simply not cost effective for use by local performing groups.
- H) Rehearsal space is a problem. We need the Event Centre to host musical acts that are too big to go into the Auditorium.

Q7: What are some strengths of the Thunder Bay music scene? What are some areas for improvement?

Additional responses:

- A) There is a community of mutual respect.
- B) Areas of improvement - why do we not use more local production companies for sound and lighting instead of bringing in other companies for events such as blues fest.
- C) There are some local bands that are more than capable of competing on the provincial and national scale. It's unfortunate that "local" in Thunder Bay means "not as good as" or "less capable". Every act has to have a home base - if we want to truly succeed as a "music city" the City as a whole needs to support the local act and not belittle them because they are "local".
- D) Caliber and quantity of local talent is strong job opps are weak.
- E) Diversity in music.
- F) Diversity, PAY PAY PAY.
- G) Variety.
- H) A willingness of musicians working together, rather than competing for limited spaces and venues is certainly a challenge. Strengths = diversity and numbers of musicians, bands & acts. Weaknesses = creative thinking and partnerships amongst music industry sector organizations and related business enterprise.
- I) A strength is the people involved are passionate about the music scene thriving.
- J) Lots of venues to play at for free (open mic style), more difficult to get a paid gig (with fair amount being paid).
- K) The whole vibe of local bands supporting each other is fantastic.
- L) Good.
- M) Generous/supportive audiences. Trained/educated professional musicians. Support for the classical scene and its educational programs (funding and recognition) could be improved. Often voter surveys/popularity contests reward a very particular group of people. For those of us not in that specific group, we get looked over. Overall support for each other as artists, as a community will serve to help strengthen us as a community.
- N) The Downtown Port Arthur music scene is great but it still has room to grow.

O) More events for musicians to participate in.

Q8: Are there enough supports for musicians in Thunder Bay? (For example, funding opportunities, performance opportunities, training, etc.)

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	29.41%	5
No	70.59%	12

Additional responses:

- A) I think it's not too bad but can always get better.
- B) There is so much local potential in Thunder Bay. The local community needs to support their artists and not take advantage of them or treat them any differently then a "headlining" act from out of town... "do unto others as you would have done unto you" ... Karma's a bitch.
- C) See previously mentioned.
- D) Don't know what exists.
- E) Venues could pay musicians and performers better instead of just playing for the door.
- F) Funding opportunities continue to be a challenge - particularly for live performances. I also believe that our isolation from Western Canada (WCMA) and Southern Ontario creates a recognition / awards opportunity void - "we're caught in the middle of nowhere". I also believe that presentations and workshops from SOCAN, CCFA, OAC, Juno & Maple Blues Awards, etc. would be beneficial.
- G) Go see a performance!
- H) Funding for new groups/educational programs is not easily accessible. Performance opportunities and education are endless.
- I) There are never enough supports for the arts.

Q9: Are there any other questions/issues/topics you'd like to see addressed at the "Becoming a Music City" event?

Additional responses:

- A) What is the job description of the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium sound and lighting techs? How are they trained and/or become qualified to do these jobs? TBCA should be supporting local music businesses and musicians, along with other arts groups especially if they are supposed to be for "the community".
- B) What does this mean for the "local" artist? By the current track record, they will be pushed aside.

- C) We need support for recorded media, radio TV internet education and marketing at a local level.
- D) Discussions with the City of Thunder Bay Arts, Culture & Heritage staff to outline processes for various festivals & special events; Parks programs, etc. discussions with major festival organizers - TBay Blue Fest; Fort Fest; Regional Festivals; etc. to create and increase awareness. A more robust database of performers that is web-accessible for perspective talent buyers, etc.
- E) Music education opportunities.
- F) I love the events that are held between venues in the entertainment district which are mainly local acts but I would love to see one event that brings in outside acts like SXSW or NXNE. Perhaps a NXNC (North by North Central).

Q10: Contact Information *optional*

Results not included

Appendix B

Agenda

- 1:30PM Registration & Music Performance by Robin Ranger
- 2:00PM Welcome & Introductions
- 2:05PM Keynote presentation by Graham Henderson (Music Canada)
- 2:55PM Panel discussion with:
- Cory Crossman (London Music Office)
 - Jen McKerral (Music & Film in Motion)
 - Jason Wellwood (CILU Radio 102.7fm)
 - Jean-Paul De Roover (Musician)
- 3:40PM Table Breakout to discuss local challenges and solutions
- 3:50PM Further Discussion with Panelists
- 4:30PM Closing Remarks

Appendix C

Web Links

Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce	http://tbchamber.ca
Music Canada	http://musiccanada.com
Music & Film in Motion	http://cionmusic.ca
London Music Office	http://londonmusicoffice.com
CILU 102.7fm	http://luradio.ca
Jean-Paul De Roover	http://jeanpaulderoover.com
Thunder Bay Tourism	http://visitthunderbay.com
TBShows	http://tbshows.com
Thunder Bay Musician's Association	http://thunderbaymusicians.com
Thunder Bay Museum	http://thunderbaymuseum.com
The Trunk	http://thetrunk.org
The Walleye	http://thewalleye.ca